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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINGSTON 001342

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR (BNICHOLS), (BENT)

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [JM](#)

SUBJECT: DIRECTOR FOR CARIBBEAN AFFAIRS MEETS WITH JLP
DEPUTY LEADER

REF: KINGSTON 01258

Classified By: CDA Ronald Robinson for Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

Summary

1. (U) Visiting WHA/CAR Office Director Brian Nichols, accompanied by poloff, met on May 10 with James Robertson, Deputy Leader of the Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) and Member of Parliament for Western St. Thomas. Robertson offered his views on the recent spate of police killings in Kingston, JLP leader Bruce Golding's first month as Leader of the Opposition, and the party's priorities for Jamaica's future. End Summary.

Violence in West Kingston

2. (C) On May 10, visiting WHA/CAR Office Director Brian Nichols, accompanied by poloff, met with James Robertson, Deputy Leader of the Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) and Member of Parliament for Western St. Thomas. Addressing the May 3 and 4 murders of three police officers and a private security guard in Kingston (reftel), Robertson characterized the killings as stand-alone "acts of terrorism" perpetrated by an independent group of disaffected young men. Robertson described the gunmen as "pot smoking" and "bible thumping," adding that two of the killers, who were shot to death by police shortly after murdering the policeman, both had their heads wrapped in the style of some Rastafarians.

3. (C) Responding to the suggestion that the killings might have been politically motivated and linked to the JLP's fiercely loyal West Kingston constituency because one of the dead gunmen was identified as the brother of JLP-linked West Kingston gang leader Christopher "Dudus" Coke, Robertson denied any connection to the usual retributive gang violence that is common in inner city neighborhoods. Supporting his theory that the murders were not sanctioned by organized criminals in West Kingston, he drew an analogy to the Columbine High School killings in Colorado, asserting that acts of violence can be planned and perpetrated without the knowledge or complicity of their families or communities.

4. (C) To further support his claim, Robertson related a telephone call he received from the brother of the owner of Marksman Security, the private security company that employed the guard who shot and killed Christopher Coke's brother. The caller was concerned about rumors that, as the brother of the company's owner, he would be killed to avenge the death of Coke's brother. After "making a few calls," Robertson assured the caller that no gangs were seeking to kill him out of retribution. Instead, he said that the gangs intended to "deal with" the unruly assailants themselves. (Note: Unbeknownst to Robertson, shortly after the killings, Charge received an urgent call from the Mexican DCM, who told him that the Jamaican owner of Marksman Security, fearing for his family's safety in the aftermath of the shootings, had requested a Mexican passport for his infant child (whose mother is a Mexican citizen) because he intended to take his family to the U.S. until the local situation settled down. Mexican DCM asked whether Embassy Kingston would then facilitate an urgent NIV issuance for the child so that the family could depart. Post accommodated the request. End Note.)

Golding's First Month as Leader

5. (C) Asked whether the newly installed Leader of the Opposition Bruce Golding would be able to control the violence in his West Kingston constituency, which some observers assert is intended to test Golding's resolve, Robertson expressed confidence that he would. He disagreed, however, with Golding's recent public comments criticizing the police for unfairly stigmatizing his constituency. (Note: On May 8, Golding accused the JCF Deputy Commissioner for Crime, a senior British policeman on secondment to the JCF, of wrongly stigmatizing West Kingston in the matter. Golding was publicly criticized by the People's National

Party (PNP) and news media for his comments. End Note.) Robertson speculated that Golding was caught up in the moment when he defended his constituents by criticizing the police force. He expressed regret at his party leader's handling of the situation, saying that Golding could have pandered to his constituents in private, without making controversial remarks to the media.

16. (C) Golding was positive on Golding's performance in his first month as JLP leader. He offered that, once the party recovers from Golding's recent damaging comments, Golding would continue to wage a strong campaign for the prime ministership. Robertson opined that Minister of National Security Peter Phillips is the PNP's only serious contender to succeed P.J. Patterson, because he is the only one with the "strength" to win. He added that Golding continues to distance himself from Robertson and other "Young Turks" within the party who helped to orchestrate Golding's rise to power. Robertson explained that many of Golding's advisors fear him (Robertson) and his "reformist" colleagues because of the political power they wield (Note: Robertson and the group of "Young Turks" are credited with being largely responsible for Seaga's ouster. End Note.). Robertson further explained that he is feared by some for his suspected ties to illegal activities, including drug trafficking.

JLP Vision for the Future

17. (C) Asked to define his party's vision for the future of Jamaica, Robertson focused heavily on small-scale economic development and the creation of job opportunities for Jamaicans. He said that, although Jamaica continues to attract large-scale development projects like hotels, none of them benefit the "small man," or common Jamaican. Robertson cited the lack of activity in the country's secondary mortgage market as evidence of a widespread reluctance to invest domestically. He stressed that only development at the community level will benefit all Jamaicans, and that the JLP would work toward that goal. Without more employment options, he continued, Jamaican graduates of local and foreign universities would continue to seek employment abroad. As an example, Robertson estimated that one half of his prep school class now lives outside of Jamaica. He added that his party is ready to take over the government and begin making the right decisions to benefit the country. He warned, however, that "you can't make the right decisions in Jamaica and stay in power."

Comment

18. (C) As in previous meetings, Robertson repeatedly mentioned that he has been branded with the suspicion of being involved in illicit activities. (He is partially correct; "strong suspicion" might be a more accurate assessment.) In truth, like many Jamaican politicians of whatever party affiliation, Robertson is known to associate with criminal elements. The fact that both he and a fellow "Young Turk" JLP Deputy Leader, Horace Chang, carry the strong whiff of impropriety, probably has much to do with Golding's post-victory policy of keeping them at arms length. Also, Robertson and Chang earned the enduring wrath of former Opposition Leader and Prime Minister Edward Seaga in their ruthless but effective campaign to unseat him, and Golding, who needs to reach out to the still-influential Seaga and his supporters to consolidate his own leadership of the JLP, cannot afford too close an association with "friends" like Robertson and Chang who carry so much baggage. Interestingly, neither Robertson nor his reformist colleagues within the JLP have publicly objected to having been sidelined within the party by Golding in recent weeks.

19. (C) Comment (cont'd): Robertson insisted that his underworld/garrison sources were unaware that the police killings would take place and were displeased with what transpired. While his assertions track with some reports that West Kingston gang leaders are at odds over the murders of police, Robertson's claims seem an attempt to deflect criticism and stigmatization that is often directed toward West Kingston and its notorious, politically affiliated criminals. End Comment.

19. (U) This cable has been cleared by WHA/CAR Director Brian Nichols.
ROBINSON